

## Boycott Eaton's

THEY SAY HISTORY REPEATS itself. Let's hope in at least one case it doesn't.

Thirty years ago the Retail, Wholesale and Department Stores Union waged a major campaign to organize workers in Eaton's stores in Ontario. Eaton's counter-attacked, and the bid failed when the Union failed to sign up enough workers to gain certification.

That campaign took place in the 1950's, and it was an upstream struggle against the current of rabid conservatism of the time. Many would argue that we face a similar mood today. But at least some things have changed, because last year the union went back to Eaton's and workers in five Ontario stores put their jobs on the line by joining up. Eaton's was unionized for the first time in its 115-year history.

But Timothy Eaton's successors were not, and are not, going to give in easily. They refused to negotiate a first contract with the union, and in late November the workers hit the streets.

They're still there, because the main union-busting tactic of management today is to hold out against a first contract until, after a protracted strike, the union falls apart. We saw that situation close to home with the Keddy's (later Glade's) Nursing Home strike, which lasted a year.

It costs businesses a lot to do this, and the only way to stop it is to make it cost them more. Boycotts by the general public have proven effective in these situations before, and it appears time to do it again.

The Canadian Labour Congress is calling for a boycott of Eaton's stores across Canada in support of worker's rights to freely organize and to a fair contract. *The Gazette* is supporting this action by refusing advertising from Eaton's, and individual staff members are refusing to shop there.

We encourage all members of the Dalhousie community to observe the boycott as well. You can make a difference.



## A few choice words

### Church doublespeak

By WENDY COOMBER

I'VE BEEN HEARING A LOT of abortion arguments lately—more than usual. If there's one thing I've come to realize from these tireless rants, it's that no one is going to change their minds. And the arguers know that, or they should.

Let's try a few facts. Pro-life arguments almost always turn to the Roman Catholic church for support, but that church has been amazingly inconsistent on this point.

Before the rise of Christianity 1,954 years ago, birthing was solely a woman's matter, as determined by archeologists and sociologists. When patriarchal Christianity arrived, that changed drastically.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said the soul was transmitted through the father's semen, thus establishing church-sanctioned protection of the male soul which now resided in the woman's womb. It became men's property.

Up until the late 19th century, the church's Doctrine of Passive Conception stated that the soul arrived in the fifth month of pregnancy (the same time most doctors begin to refuse abortions because the fetus' cerebral cortex has begun to develop). It also contradicted Aquinas to say that the soul came not from the father but from God.

In 1869 Pope Pius X contradicted everyone, tacitly admitting either that God had misinformed his church about His method of instilling the soul into the body, or else that He had decided to alter it. Pius said the soul arrived at conception.

During the years of the Inquisition the church batted

nary an eye when pregnant women were burned at the stake.

However, the church was a little late in coming around to the state's point of view because the United States had already defined abortion as a criminal offense in 1830. So was contraception.

Throughout the 18th century, churchmen taught women that their children belonged to God. Naturally, mothers who couldn't afford to feed the children the church forced them to bear gave them back to the church. The hospital of St. Vincent de Paul, at that time, reported as many as 5,000 infants annually deposited on God's doorstep.

Foundling hospitals received more infants than they could take care of. London's first foundling hospital admitted 15,000 infants between 1756 and 1760. Fewer than a third survived to adolescence. In Europe, the death rate for children in foundling institutions ran between 80 and 90 per cent. "Parish officers entrusted the care of new borns to women nicknamed "killing nurses," because they were expected to do the state's dirty work, and see to it that unwanted children did not long survive," wrote Marvin Harris in his book, *Cannibals and Kings*.

In effect, the state is still trying to wash its hands of mothers who cannot afford their children by reducing social assistance, expecting in some instances to actually reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies. Hal

Church and state arguments are transparently inconsistent attempts at controlling women's bodies and minds. When it all comes down to the crunch, it is a woman's choice. And even pro-choice women like children.

By KIMBERLEY WHITCHURCH

DAVID C. McCANN'S PRO-life commentary in last week's *Gazette* raised a few questions which deserve to be answered.

Consider the following

### Letters...

#### Bomb threat caused re-evaluation

To the editors,

The recent controversy over Dr. Henry Morgentaler's visit to Dalhousie has caused me to re-evaluate my opinion of certain members of the pro-life movement. Threats on the life of Dr. Morgentaler and on the lives of student councillors, as well as the bomb threat on the Victoria General Hospital, make me wonder what these individuals mean by pro-life.

If these organizations utilized their vast energies to improve the availability of birth control and family planning rather than attacking such organizations which have no involvement with abortion but indeed work to decrease abortion likelihood, they would be pro-life. Yet their threats, their violence and their condemnation of services which provide basic human rights labels them as something other than pro-life.

Gregory Hardy

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pregnancies:

- the twelve-year-old victim of incest;
- the victim of a gang-rape;
- the woman whose fetus is revealed by amniocentesis to carry a rare genetic disease which will cause its short life to be one of great pain;
- the woman whose pregnancy will kill her if brought to full term.

I find it difficult to believe that it is truly the will of God that these conceptions occurred in the first place. Consider especially the last example. Would it not be murder to let this pregnancy continue and watch this woman die? Is her life really less important than that of the fetus?

It's a bit simplistic to argue that every baby is as "human as you and me" from the moment of conception just because it already contains all of its genetic material. If that's the case, then why is the product of a miscarriage not given the Last Rites and buried and a full burial in consecrated ground? Miscarriage is just another name for a spontaneous abortion.

Furthermore, the definition of what's human has been under contention for a long time. It's nice that Mr. McCann feels he has the answers, but not all doctors are so certain.

Let's take a look at the other end of the scale: the moment of death. One definition used by doctors is the cessation of brain waves. Okay, this guy's dead now; we can transplant his organs. So why is an embryo with a cerebral cortex not even developed enough to have brain waves accorded equal status to "you and me?" This is the case for first trimester abortions, by far the most widely performed.

I hate to be the one to tell him, but Mr. McCann has completely

misinterpreted his "all-time favorite slogan." To compare the wish that Every Child be a Wanted Child to a toy one no longer wants is entirely fallacious. What this really means is, take a look at what happens after an unwanted child is born. Do the pro-life people care about neglected, malnourished and abused children? Or if you need a more immediate example, look at what happened on the Acadian Lines bus from Sydney last week. That newborn smothered in a toilet was not a Wanted Child. The mother was desperate young women who probably would not have been driven to such extremes if she's had access to abortion on demand six months ago.

Although a polite request should be all that's necessary.

I don't really expect to change Mr. McCann's mind about abortion. In fact, I rather admire his strength of convictions. However, like every man who calls himself "pro-life," he's lucky he will never, ever have to make such a choice about his own body. No man on the planet will ever know the terror of an unwanted pregnancy. So tote your banners high, boys.

You might say that anatomy is destiny, and that any woman who gets pregnant deserves it. You might point out the laws of the land, and of the Church, which make it difficult to justify abortion. Interestingly, current Catholic doctrine on abortion only came into effect in 1869. To use a timely quote, "whatever happened to pervert that organization, the world will never know." However, bear in mind that three separate juries in Quebec, a very Catholic province, would not convict Dr. Morgentaler.